

## From “God is a Woman and She’s Growing Older” by Rabbi Maggie Wenig

God is a woman and she is growing older. She moves more slowly now. She cannot stand erect. Her face is lined. Her voice is scratchy. Sometimes she has to strain to hear. God is a woman and she is growing older; yet, she remembers everything.

On Rosh Hashanah, the anniversary of the day on which she gave us birth, God sits down at her kitchen table, opens the Book of Memories, and begins turning the pages; and God remembers.

“There, there is the world when it was new and my children when they were young.” As she turns each page she smiles, seeing before her, like so many dolls in a department store window, all the beautiful colors of our skin, all the varied shapes and sizes of our bodies. She marvels at our accomplishments: the music we have written, the gardens we have planted, the stories we have told, the ideas we have spun.

Then there are the pages she would rather skip. Things she wishes she could forget: her children spoiling the home she created for us, brothers putting each other in chains. She remembers seeing us racing down dangerous roads—herself unable to stop us. She remembers the dreams she had for us—dreams we never fulfilled. And she remembers the names, so many names, inscribed in the book, names of all the children she has lost through war and famine, earthquake and accident, disease and suicide. And God remembers the many times she sat by a bedside weeping that she could not halt the process she herself set into motion. God stays awake all night turning the pages of her book.

God is home, turning the pages of her book. “Come home,” she wants to say to us, “Come home.” But she won’t call. For she is afraid that we will say, “No.” She can anticipate the conversation: “We are so busy. We’d love to see you but we just can’t come. Too much to do.”

What if we did go home and visit God? What might it be like?

God would usher us into her kitchen, seat us at her table and pour two cups of tea. She has been alone so long that there is much she wants to say. But we barely allow her to get a word in edgewise, for we are afraid of what she might say and we are afraid of

silence. So we fill an hour with our chatter, words, words, so many words. Until, finally, she touches her finger to her lips and says, “Shh. Sha. Be still.”

Then she pushes back her chair and says, “Let me have a good look at you.” And she looks. And in a single glance, God sees us as both newly born and dying: coughing and crying and laughing and dancing, as a young child afraid of the road ahead and as an old person looking back wondering where the years went.

God sees things about us we have forgotten and things we do not yet know. For naught is hidden from God’s sight.

God holds our face in her two hands and whispers, “Do not be afraid, I will be faithful to the promise I made to you when you were young. I will be with you. Even to your old age I will be with you. When you are grey headed still I will hold you. I gave birth to you, I carried you. I will hold you still. Grow old along with me....”

Our fear of the future is tempered now by curiosity. The universe is infinite. Unlimited possibilities are arrayed before us still. We can awaken each morning to wonder: What shall I learn today? What can I create today? What will I notice that I have never seen before?

It has been a good visit. Before we leave, it is our turn to take a good look at God. The face which time has marked looks not frail to us now—but wise. For we understand that God knows those things only the passage of time can teach: that one can survive the loss of a love; that one can feel secure even in the midst of an ever changing world; that there is dignity in being alive even when every bone aches. God’s movements seem not slow to us—but strong and intent, unlike our own. For we are too busy to see beneath the surface. We speak too rapidly to truly listen, and we move too quickly to feel what we touch. We form opinions too fast to judge honestly. While God, God moves slowly and with intention. God sees everything there is to see, understands everything God hears, and touches all that lives.

Ahh, that is why we were created to grow older: each added day of life, each new year make us more like God who is ever growing older.

How often do we sit in the house of prayer holding in our hands pages of greeting cards bound together into a prayer book, hundreds of words we ourselves have not written.

Will we merely place our signatures at the bottom and drop the cards – the prayer book – in the mail?

God would prefer that we come home. She is waiting for us, ever patiently until we are ready. God will not sleep. She will leave the door open and the candles burning waiting patiently for us to come home.

Perhaps one day...perhaps one day we will be able to look into God's aging face and say, "*Avinu Malkeinu*, our Parent, our Ruler, we have come home."